

# (Un)faithful Subjects of (Un)faithful Rulers

## Loyalty in the Earliest Central European Chronicles

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**Abstract.** This article focuses on the role loyalty played in the relationship between rulers and their subjects in the earliest Central European chronicles, written at the beginning of the twelfth century: *Gesta principum Polonorum* by Gallus Anonymus, *Chronica Boemorum* by Cosmas of Prague, and the twelfth-century historiographical tradition of the Hungarian Royal court, which survived as a part of the fourteenth-century compilation called *The Illuminated Chronicle*. Through the comparative study of those narratives this article aims to analyze how authors of those works, closely connected to the ruling elites of recently Christianized Central European polities, imagined bonds of loyalty between rulers and their subjects, by analyzing the questions about their unilateral or mutual nature, accompanying responsibilities, and the consequences of breaking them. Answering those questions reveals common ideological underpinnings of the concepts of loyalty used in Central European narrative sources, which present a vision of loyalty as primarily a reciprocal bond characterized by its negative content. This highlights the ideological message of consensual lordship, which coexists in those narratives with strong ideas about the divine origins of dynastic authority, constituting an important common feature in the political and cultural development of Central Europe as a historical region.

**Keywords:** loyalty, disloyalty, lordship, social bonds, Central European historiography, Middle Ages

In his seminal work on the *Chronica Boemorum* by Cosmas of Prague, Dušan Třeštík remarked that the author's message about relations between Bohemian rulers and their subjects centered around the "ideology of fidelity."<sup>1</sup> Pointing out the importance of the reciprocal bond between Přemyslids and Bohemians, based on the rule of *do ut des*, Třeštík framed his argument in the "feudo-vassalic" paradigm of fidelity as an ideological institution specific to feudalism.<sup>2</sup> In formulating his argument the famous Czech historian was following directly in the footsteps of his teacher, František Graus, whose critique of the concept of *germanische Treue* had

1 Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 160–65.

2 Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 161.

an immense impact on the study of the role of loyalty in the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> Graus argued that there was no continuity between the *fides* of warriors from Tacitus' *Germania* and the *fides* of Carolingian capitularies, and that the legally binding mutual obligation of *fides*, based on the rule of *do ut des*, was a new creation formulated under the decisive influence of the Church in the Carolingian times by the burgeoning feudal society.<sup>4</sup>

While Třeštík's ideas formed a starting point for many inquiries into the ideological message of *Chronica Boemorum*, the explanation of the chronicle's vision of reciprocal bonds of fidelity as an ideological institution of feudal society cannot satisfy a modern researcher familiar with the late twentieth-century debate over feudalism.<sup>5</sup> Criticism of medieval society as based on vassalage revealed the artificial nature of this category of relationship. Susan Reynolds, one of the key critics of this concept, proved that it was a development of twelfth-century jurisprudence that led to the gradual uniformization of the complicated web of early medieval social relations.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, a number of studies published since her *Fiefs and Vassals* underscored the point that Graus's concept of feudal loyalty with its legal, normative character only applies to the more literate society of the High Middle Ages.<sup>7</sup> With the focus shifting away from normative orders and regulations, toward the so-called *Spielregeln*—unwritten rules of behaviors and shared beliefs<sup>8</sup>—a new vision of early medieval society emerged, one composed of multiple overlapping temporal communities held together by personal bonds and common ideals.<sup>9</sup> This offered a different perspective on the concept of loyalty in the Middle Ages, now understood as a broader phenomenon, underlying not only relationships between lords and their followers, but also between family members or friends.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, Dušan Třeštík was certainly right in pointing out that the issue of loyalty was an important theme in the *Chronica Boemorum*, given that much of Cosmas's work focuses on the internal struggle between the members of the ruling

3 Graus, "Über die sogennante germanische Treue," 155–67.

4 Graus, "Herrschaft und Treue," 8 ff.; For a representative treatment of fidelity as a specific feature of feudo-vassalic relations from Graus's contemporaries, see: Ganshof, *Feudalism*.

5 A good overview is offered in: White, "A Crisis of Fidelity in c. 1000?."

6 Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, 17–34, 475–78.

7 For the links between the increasing use of writing and the creation of narrowly understood *fidelitas* as a legal term of jurisprudence in High Middle Ages, see: Wickham, *Courts and Conflict*; White, "A Crisis of Fidelity in c. 1000?"; Weinfurter, "Lehnswesen, Treueid und Vertrauen."

8 Althoff, "Einleitung," 13 ff.

9 Cheyette, "Some Reflections on Violence," 259.

10 For example, see: Sonntag and Zermatten, "Loyalty in the Middle Ages: Introductory Remarks on a Cross-Social Value"; Eickels, "Verwandtschaft, Freundschaft und Vasallität."

Přemyslid dynasty. The chronicler bemoaned the state of contemporary politics, full of scheming, treachery and constantly shifting allegiances. In fact, *Chronica Boemorum* shared the turbulent circumstances of its creation with two other early Central European chronicles—*Gesta principum Polonorum* of Gallus Anonymous, and the oldest historiographic tradition of the Hungarian royal court, which survived only as a part of the fourteenth-century compilation known as the *Illuminated Chronicle*, but was probably penned either at the court of King Coloman around 1110 or a few decades earlier.<sup>11</sup> Just as Bohemia at the time of Cosmas was for the scene of constant in-fighting between different Přemyslids, Gallus started working on his *Gesta* at the court of the Polish prince Bolesław III Wrymouth, shortly after he had caused a significant political uproar by violently resolving a long-standing dispute with his older step-brother Zbigniew.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile in Hungary, plagued in the previous century by the conflict between two branches of the Árpáds descended from King Andrew I and his brother Béla I, the 1100s brought another bloody confrontation between King Coloman and his younger brother Álmos.<sup>13</sup>

It is surprising then that the problem of loyalty in the context of the earliest Central European chronicles, despite their copious analyses in Polish, Czech, and Hungarian historiographies, is the subject of relatively few studies. It was only very recently that the renewed interest in the topic fuelled by the new theoretical developments found its reflection in local historiographies. Thus, the question of

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11 Some version of the so-called *Primeval Chronicle*, also referred to as *Urgesta* in the Hungarian historiography, must have existed at least by 1110, since a fragment of it was used by Gallus Anonymous. However, given that the Primeval Chronicle is only a hypothetical text which forms the basis of the fourteenth-century compilation of the royal historiographical tradition known as the *Illuminated Chronicle*, its exact date is subject to debate. While a Coloman-period date remains one of the more popular hypotheses, there are also claims that it was composed at the court of King Ladislas (1077–1095) or during the reign of King Solomon (1063–1074). As pointed out by Dániel Bagi, while it is possible that some previous version of the chronicle existed, it is Coloman's version that forms the core of the narrative surrounding Hungarian history from the death of Saint Stephen to the exploits of Saint Ladislas. Thus, it is this part of the *Illuminated Chronicle* that will be treated as the twelfth-century historiographical tradition of Hungarian royal court, contemporary to the first Bohemian and Polish chronicles. See: Bagi, "The Dynastic Conflicts," 139–58; General overview of this problem also in: Grzesik and Bak, "The Text of the Illuminated Chronicle," 7–9.

12 The creation of the Gallus' chronicle is often linked directly with Bolesław III Wrymouth's court's need to present a version of recent events that would serve to relieve the political tensions caused by Zbigniew's torture and death. For this position, see already: Adamus, *O monarchii Gallowej*; Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*, 5–12.

13 For the legitimization of the victorious sides of these conflicts as one of the main issues concerning the authors of the earliest royal Hungarian historiographical tradition, see: Grzesik and Bak, "The Text of the Illuminated Chronicle," 7–12; Bagi, "The Dynastic Conflicts," 141.

the vision of loyalty in Cosmas's work was only recently revisited in an article by Jakub Razim, who studied *fides* and *fidelitas* within the context of reciprocal bonds between the ruler and his subjects.<sup>14</sup> A similarly framed study of the relationship between Hungarian monarchs and their followers was presented at the very same time by Angelika Herucová and Pavol Hudáček. While it did not focus exclusively on the oldest historiographical tradition of the Hungarian royal court, it is the most relevant study devoted to the loyalty that touches on the subject of its representation in the earliest parts of *Illuminated Chronicle*.<sup>15</sup> The topic of loyalty in the *Gesta principum Polonorum* has not yet been the subject of a comparable, single-focused study similar to the aforementioned examples. This is not to say that Polish historians were not interested in Gallus's depiction of loyalty, but that those inquiries were usually limited and not at the forefront of their work.<sup>16</sup>

This article aims to analyze the role loyalty played in the relationship between rulers and their subjects in the earliest Central European chronicles, by answering the questions about its unilateral or mutual nature, accompanying responsibilities and consequences of breaking it. Furthermore, the comparative perspective allows for capturing similarities and differences between the earliest works of historiography from the region. *Gesta principum Polonorum*, *Chronica Boemorum*, and those fragments of the *Illuminated Chronicle* which arguably belong to the early twelfth-century historiographical tradition of the Hungarian royal court, shared not only the time and circumstances of their creation, but also many themes—which led Norbert Kersken to place all three of them in the genera of “national histories” that aspire to tell—through the lens of the deeds of the members of the ruling dynasty—the “national” history of Poles, Bohemians and Hungarians.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, this category is broad, and each of the chroniclers pursued his own, distinct ideological goals. This may have resulted in the differences in the vision of loyalty they presented, which makes the proposed comparison an ever more interesting subject of inquiry.

14 Razim, “Věrnost v Kosmově kronice,” 20–21.

15 Herucová and Hudáček, “Verní a nevěrní královi.”

16 Thus, a short exploration of the reciprocal bond between Piasts and their subjects can be found in: Dalewski, “Władca i moiżni w Kronice Galla Anonima,” 37–42; A good example of the incidental nature of previous research on loyalty in the earliest Polish chronicle is Marian Plezia's exploration of the meaning of *traditor* in the *Gesta*, which serves to discuss the passage concerning the death of St Stanislaus, see: Plezia, *Dookoła sprawy św. Stanisława*.

17 Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der “nationes”*.

## Dynastic power and consensual lordship

The legendary times when the ancestors' heroic deeds took place—often coupled with divine intervention—served an essential function in medieval historiography. The depictions of the first rulers were used to portray an ideal vision of their office and to establish the set of norms that govern the relationship between rulers and their subjects.<sup>18</sup> While the complicated nature of the historiographical tradition of the Hungarian royal court makes its oldest depiction of the legendary Árpadian a subject of guesswork,<sup>19</sup> the two surviving twelfth-century representations of the dynastic legends found in Central European chronicles share a similar vision of the origin and nature of sovereign power. The eponymous ancestors Přemysl and Piast were both men of humble origin chosen by God to lead their people.<sup>20</sup> Their election and the subsequent status of the Přemyslid and Piast dynasties as *domini naturales* of Bohemia and Poland serves as the basis of their authority. There were twofold consequences that the vision of the sacralized sovereign authority of Central European dynasties brought to the depiction of idealized loyalty in the earliest chronicles of the region. On the one hand, it seemed to create an expectation of loyalty, formulated in an impersonal way toward all members of the dynasty. On the other, it meant that Přemyslids, Piasts and Árpáds had to follow certain standards of conduct befitting a Christian sovereign. However, besides the examples set up in depictions of legendary or idealized ancestors, the first Central European chroniclers seldom made direct statements about the proper way in which rulers should behave towards their subjects, preferring to pass short moral judgments.

This makes Jaromír's speech from the chronicle of Cosmas of Prague even more important. In the oft-cited passage the ruined, blind prince Jaromír arrives in Prague, having learned about the death of his brother Duke Oldřich. He comes not to become a ruler himself, but to enthrone his nephew Břetislav I. In a speech given during the ceremony, Jaromír instructs both the new ruler and his subjects:

18 Weiler, "Tales of First Kings and the Culture of Kingship in the West," 101–3.

19 Some historians went as far as to suggest that the author of the first Hungarian chronicle did not dwell on the Magyar pagan past or simply ignored it, focusing instead on the establishment of the Christian kingdom by Saint Stephen. See: Kristó, *A történeti irodalom Magyarországon a kezdetektől 1241-ig*, 41–42; Veszprémy, "More Paganismo," 183; For an overview of the discussion about the pagan prehistory in the Primeval Chronicle, see: Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der "nationes"*, 652–54, 670–74.

20 1.5–1.8 in Cosmas of Prague, *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 43–48. [Henceforth: *The Chronicle of the Czechs*]; 1.3–1.4 in *Gesta principum Polonorum: The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles*, 22–24. [Henceforth: *GpP*].

“Since my fates have not permitted me to be your duke, I designate this man as duke for you and praise him. You should obey him as befits a duke and show him the fidelity owed to your prince. I warn you, son, and again and again repeat the warning: worship these men like fathers, love them like brothers, and keep their counsel in all your dealings. To them you commit burghs and the people to be ruled; through them the realm of Bohemia stands, has stood, and will stand forever.”<sup>21</sup>

This speech about the proper relationship between rulers and their subjects clearly points toward loyalty as a backbone of the Bohemian society, as already noted by Dušan Třeštík. The Czech medievalist also further elaborated on the distinction between *obedientia* owed to the *dux* and *fidelitas* owed to the *princeps*, suggesting that Cosmas may be differentiating here between two roles performed by the Přemyslids: war-time army leaders and peaceful rulers.<sup>22</sup> Jakub Razim cautiously argues that the distinction between *obedientia* and *fidelitas* might have lain in absolute, unilateral loyalty between warriors and the commanding *dux* and contextual loyalty of peacetime, based on the *do ut des* principle.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, both Třeštík and Razim—like other historians—agree that Cosmas focuses more on the second vision of mutual loyalty between the Přemyslids and the Bohemian elites.<sup>24</sup> The rule of *do ut des* very much shapes Jaromír’s speech, who spells out that while the elite should be loyal to Břetislav, he should treat them with familial love, listen to their counsel and rely on their assistance in governing his state. Except in time of war, Jaromír called for a consensual model of rulership in which the Přemyslid duke would cooperate with the elite representatives of the political community of Bohemia, who would participate in his sovereign authority.<sup>25</sup>

21 1.42 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 107; “Quoniam me mea fata non sinunt, ut sim vester dux, hunc assignamus vobis in ducem et collaudamus, quo ei obediat, ut dignum est duci, et debitam fidelitatem exhibeat, ut par est suo principi. Te autem, fili, moneo et repetens iterum iterumque monebo, istos colas ut patres, hos diligas ut fratres et in omnibus negotiis tibi consiliarios habeas. His urbes et populum ad regendum committas, per hos enim Boemie regnum stat et stetit atque stabit in sempiternum”, 1.42 in *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum*, 78–79. [Henceforth: *Chronica Boemorum*].

22 According to this historian, the differentiation here might have been inspired by Isidore of Seville’s *Ethymologiae* Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 161; Peter Kopal points out that this duality was also reflected in the Indo-European differentiation between aspects of kingship represented by Mitra-Varuna, see: Kopal, “Král versus kníže?,” 365–66.

23 Razim, “Věrnost v Kosmově kronice,” 28.

24 Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika*, 162–63; Razim, “Věrnost v Kosmově kronice,” 28; Kopal, “Král versus kníže?,” 367.

25 Bláhová, “Stát a vláda státu,” 131–36; Wihoda, “Kníže a jeho verní,” 20–29; For a vision of such “consensual rulership” in High Middle Ages, see: Schneidmüller, “Konsensuale Herrschaft.”

The idea of a monarch consulting with the members of the secular and ecclesiastical elite over his most important decisions was a common concept in the medieval ideal of rulership. The *consensus fidelium* before the ruler's actions became, according to Carolingian documents, an important rule of early medieval politics.<sup>26</sup> The rulers who neglected to obtain the *consensus* of the ruling elites and disregarded the counsel of advisors risked being accused of tyranny.<sup>27</sup> One can see the active role that elites played in the internal politics of Bohemia, Poland and Hungary—either through voicing their support for one side or the other in dynastic conflicts or through serving as advisors—to be an essential part of the relationship between rulers and their subjects. In all three polities loyalty was primarily rewarded by the participation of the most powerful of the subjects in the exercise of the dynasty's sovereign authority.

Proximity to the rulers had many advantages. Just as members of the family or friends feasted with dukes and kings in order to highlight the close bond between them, so did the members of the elite.<sup>28</sup> While the *Primeval Chronicle* does not mention this explicitly, readers can assume that during feasts like the one attended by King Solomon and Duke Géza in Chapter 97 of the *Illuminated Chronicle* they were joined by their entourage.<sup>29</sup> Cosmas of Prague several times notes feasts which Přemyslid rulers held for their *comites* and *vice versa*.<sup>30</sup> Gallus also used the feasts of Bolesław I the Brave to demonstrate the proper relationship between ruler and subjects. The first Polish king, who “loved his dukes, *comites*, and princes as if they were his brothers or his sons”<sup>31</sup> had twelve friends and counselors with whom he would regularly dine. While the chronicler spends a considerable amount of time describing the lavishly set tables, the redistribution of wealth, food, and drink was not the main attraction of those banquets—participation itself was the main reward for *fideles*.<sup>32</sup> Gallus mentions that a person who for some reason became excluded from the common feasts and banished from the presence of the king, even just temporarily, “would feel as though he was dying rather than alive, and not free but cast

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26 Hannig, *Consensus fidelium*.

27 Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 103–6; Althoff, “Colloquium familiare.”

28 For the importance of feasts in the Middle Ages in the social context, see: Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 152–59; Banaszkiewicz, “Trzy razy uczta,” 95–97.

29 97 in *The Illuminated Chronicle: Chronica de gestis Hungarorum e codice picto saec. xiv.*, 188–89. [Henceforth: *Illuminated Chronicle*].

30 Just for an example from the work of Cosmas, see: 3.1 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 183; 2.19 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 138.

31 “Duces vero suosque comites ac principes acsi fratres vel filios diligebat”, 1.13 in *GpP*, 58–59.

32 For Marian Dygo, the depiction of Bolesław's feast builds on the Christological vision of the first Polish king—the main reward for faithful service would therefore be admission to a sacred eucharistic community. See: Dygo, “Uczty Bolesława Chrobrego,” 41–54.



into a dungeon until he was readmitted to the king's grace and presence."<sup>33</sup> The feasts created a great opportunity to reassert one's loyalty and dedication. When returning from the campaign in Rus', Bolesław I and his closest followers become surrounded by a large Ruthenian force, but he remains confident in his victory, trusting the promises made by his soldiers during feasts and division of the booty. The fighters respond that they value triumph over any kind of loot, thus reasserting the opinion that material rewards were secondary for the followers of the Piast monarch.<sup>34</sup>

Offices and shares in the sovereign authority of the monarch as a reward for loyal service can be also found in the *Chronica Boemorum*. This is made evident in Vratislav II's decision to make his court chaplain Lanzo the new bishop of Prague, instead of his brother Jaromír.<sup>35</sup> Cosmas makes the reasons behind the Bohemian ruler's choice very clear—it was because Lanzo “always remained faithful to the duke,”<sup>36</sup> and Vratislav himself presents this argument in front of the gathering of secular and ecclesiastical elite that was to participate in the episcopal election, stating that by elevating Lanzo to the office he would set an example for future generations of “how much they ought to be faithful to their lords.”<sup>37</sup> While the rejection of this candidate by the gathering can give the impression that Cosmas does not approve of this method of recognizing and rewarding loyalty, one has to take into account that Cosmas's negative opinion of the first Czech king and the broader context of dynastic conflict in which this nomination took place influenced this depiction. A few decades later Břetislav II, whom Cosmas depicted much more favorably than his father, decided to fill the very same position with his chaplain Hermann. His decision was influenced by the wise advice of Wiprecht, his bother-in-law, who recommended Herman, listing among his many qualities the most important ones, saying that he was “constant in the king's service, faithful in the matters entrusted to him, a trustworthy executor of embassies to be carried out.”<sup>38</sup>

While the Hungarian tradition does not contain any such strong ideological statement on the ideal relationship between ruler and his most influential subjects, there is a small clue within the text that suggests a similar attitude. When, during the Christmas of 1073 King Solomon and *ispan* Vid plotted against Duke Géza, their scheme was foiled because local Abbot William overheard their conversation. We learn that the abbot decided to warn the duke and was faithful to him “because

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33 1.12 in *GpP*, 59.

34 1.7 in *GpP*, 44–46.

35 2.23 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 115.

36 2.22 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 140.

37 “ut per hoc discant posterī, quantum dominis suis debeant fideles fieri”, 2.23 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 115.

38 3.7 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 189.



he [Géza] was the son of the founder of his [William's] church."<sup>39</sup> Thus William's allegiance was built on the obligation toward the family of his monastery's founder and patron.<sup>40</sup> While this does not necessarily show that the *Primeval Chronicle* also contained a strong idea of consensual lordship, it definitely underlines the role of the ruler's generosity in securing the fidelity of his subjects.

This strongly suggests that in the *Chronica Boemorum* and *Gesta principum Polonorum* the position of the Přemyslids and Piasts as "natural masters" did not exclude the idea of consensual lordship—one in which their subjects would participate to some extent in their sovereign authority. Moreover, bonds between Bohemian and Polish rulers and local elites seem to have been based on mutual loyalty guided by the *do ut des* principle. Cosmas states this directly, while Gallus seems to be only suggesting it. Rulers were supposed to respect magnates and dignitaries, consult them and listen to their advice, while expecting their help in exercising authority. Participation in the exercise of the sovereign authority of the dynasty was in itself the main reward for their subjects' loyalty, with material remuneration being—at least for the authors of the chronicles—a benefit of secondary importance.

### (Un)faithful rulers

For further exploration of what the bond of loyalty between a ruler and his subjects entailed and what its limits were one needs to turn toward the smaller narratives within the earliest Central European chronicles, in which their authors present their audience with model characters of loyal and disloyal rulers and their servants.

The depiction of King Vratislav II of Bohemia certainly portrayed him as one of those rulers who disregarded the bond of loyalty between them and their subjects, with many of his actions directly contradicting the vision of good rulership expressed in Jaromír's speech. Cosmas recalls how Vratislav enacted his revenge on *comes* Mstíš, who was once responsible for detaining the Přemyslid's wife when young Vratislav fled to Hungary fearing his brother Spityhnev II. The *comes*, hoping that his current ruler would not hold a grudge, invited Vratislav to a feast on the occasion of the dedication of the new church Mstíš had built in his burg. Breaking with the traditionally convivial atmosphere of the public meal, Vratislav lets Mstíš know that the castellany of the burg is withdrawn. Mstíš notes that the Přemyslid is "the duke and the lord" and as such he can "do with his burg what he pleases", but it is clear both for him and for the reader that such an act is not in line with the proper conduct of the sovereign, and can escalate to even more violent transgression. Thus

39 3.7 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 189; 116 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 214–15.

40 Herucová and Hudáček, "Verní a neverní královi," 15.

Mstiš flees that very night fearing that he will end up losing not only his position, but also his eyes or limbs—an assumption that Cosmas finds, damningly for Vratislav II, completely reasonable.<sup>41</sup>

Even more unfavorable is a small but illustrative episode about the king's treatment of one of the Bohemian nobles, Beneda, who having for some reason offended the king in the past and lived in exile in Poland, wanted to return to the Přemyslid's favor. Looking for someone to intercede on his behalf with the Bohemian king, he turns toward Benno, the bishop of Meissen. Thus, when Vratislav enters Sorabia with his army in 1088, he learns that Beneda is in the vicinity and sends for him with the message that "he might come to him under a pledge of faith (*sub fidei pacto*)."<sup>42</sup> This is just a deception, and when Beneda meets with the king, the monarch takes him aside, attempts to deprive him of his richly encrusted sword, and when the audacious Beneda resists, he deprives him of his life. Moreover the king, "as if he could revenge himself against the dead man", orders for Beneda's body to be dragged behind a horse.<sup>43</sup> The memory of the king's atrocious disregard for the pledge of faith given to the Bohemian noble can be seen in the later *Continuation of the Chronicle of Cosmas by the monk of Sázava*, whose author, drawing from the eleventh-century obituary, called Beneda a just man who died a martyr's death.<sup>44</sup> It is thus very probable that Cosmas, while not using such explicit language, would agree that Vratislav's casual disregard for his own word was comparable to the faithlessness of the pagan tyrants he listed in his chronicle.<sup>44</sup>

One can see the link between this disregard for the bond of loyalty between Vratislav and his subjects and the king's troubles with his brother Conrad and son Břetislav II. The ease with which a large part of the army—and even those gathered in the ruler's tent—sided with the young prince after a seemingly petty conflict led him to kill king's closest advisor Zderad during the siege of Brno in 1091 might have been influenced by a general resentment toward the monarch, who seemed to listen only to a narrow group of bad advisors.<sup>45</sup> Vratislav's general attitude toward

41 2.19 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 138–39.

42 2.40 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 166–68.

43 "Sicque iustis vir velut Dei martyr miles Beneda obiit V. Id, Iulii [...]", see critical apparatus of 2.40 in *Chronica Bohemorum*, 145; More on the obituary of Beneda as an ideological counterpoint to Vratislav's reign in: Reitinger, *Vratislav: první král Čechu*, 62–64.

44 For Cosmas's use of comparison with pagan rulers like Nero and Herod, to describe tyrannical behavior, see: Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 102–9; Antonín, *The Ideal Ruler in Medieval Bohemia*, 146.

45 The underlying reasons for this conflict can be found in the struggle between established members of Vratislav's ruling elite and the younger generation of nobles which grew impatient with the king's long reign, see: Wolverton, *Hastening toward Prague*, 203; Krzemińska, "Břetislav II: Pokus o charakteristiku," 730–31; On the similar note, although ultimately pointing toward

pledges and promises was best voiced by the closest supporters of his son, who despite the miraculous reconciliation between the Přemyslids chose to leave the country, not believing in the monarch's change of heart.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, Vratislav's rule does not collapse completely due to his history of breaking the bonds between him and Bohemian magnates. The lack of more dire consequences might have resulted from the fact that this part of Cosmas's narrative touched on the very recent past, leaving the first Czech historian little place for creative license. Thus, he had to limit himself to simply presenting his negative judgment of the actions of the first Bohemian king, only referring obliquely to their destructive effects on the bonds of loyalty.

In the story of the rise and fall of King Aba of Hungary, preserved in the pages of the *Illuminated Chronicle*, the anonymous chronicler drew the connection between a ruler breaking the pledges and oaths that the monarch gave to the elites of the realm and the dissolution of the bonds of loyalty even more directly. The rise of Aba was a consequence of the deposition of King Peter Orselo by the Hungarian nobility. While Peter was appointed as a successor by St Stephen himself, in the text of the chronicle his designation was due to the machinations of the evil Queen Gisela and her accomplice Buda.<sup>47</sup> Having obtained his throne in such a way, Peter—a foreigner, “cast aside all goodness of royal serenity and raged with Teutonic fury, despising the nobles of Hungary [...]”<sup>48</sup> He distributed all of the offices and strongholds to the Germans and Italians with whom he surrounded himself, and who—just like the king himself—frequently violated Hungarian women. When magnates of Hungary “by common counsel” asked Peter to stop those of his men who committed such acts, he pridefully ignored them, responding that he would, as long as he lived, entrust all of the offices to the foreigners.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Peter completely defied the bond of loyalty—by disrespecting the Hungarian magnates, not listening to their counsel and by refusing to let them participate in the exercise of sovereign power. No wonder then, that “in the third year of Peter's reign the magnates of the Hungarians and the nobles leagued themselves together on the advice of the bishops against King Peter,” and appointed Saint Stephen's brother-in-law, *ispán* Aba,

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the conflict between supporters of the new idea of kingship and those who wanted to see the ducal power in terms of the old arrangement between Bohemians and Přemysl the Ploughman: Wihoda, “Kosmas a Vratislav,” 377.

46 2.48 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 177.

47 This re-framing of the past was necessary in order to reconcile the cult of St Stephen with the cruel fate of his kinsman Vazul, see: Bak, “Queens as Scapegoats in Medieval Hungary,” 223–33.

48 “omnem regie serenitatis benignitatem abiecit et Teutonico furore seviens nobiles Hungarie aspernabatur”, 79 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 130–31.

49 71 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 130–31.

to be king.<sup>50</sup> With Peter defeated in battle and Buda “promoter of all evil, by whose counsel Peter had afflicted Hungary” killed, Aba immediately revoked all of the enactments and exactions established by Peter and so hated by the Hungarians.<sup>51</sup> It seems that for this Aba initially enjoyed good a relationship with his subjects, which helped him defend his position against the German military interventions on behest of the exiled Peter. With time however, misled by the sense of security, he “became insolent and began to rage cruelly against the Hungarians. For he held that all things should be in common between lords and servants; and also regarded breaking an oath as naught.”<sup>52</sup>

Aba’s insolence meant the rejection of the commonly accepted rules of politics. It is worth noting that for the author disregarding oaths is on a par with disregarding the social hierarchy—and as such, God’s order. As for the violence, here the chronicler refers to the events that were yet to come. Disregard for the political norms angered the Hungarian magnates, who conspired against the king. Having learned about this, Aba captured the conspirators and had them executed without trial, which further damaged his cause, and under the pretext of holding a council he gathered fifty noblemen and had them killed. At this point St Gerard, bishop of Cenad, intervened and “with the authority of his office sternly rebuked the king and foretold that great peril threatened him.”<sup>53</sup>

The saint’s prophecy came true. Dissatisfied with Aba’s reign, a *coniuratio* of Hungarian nobles approached Henry III, cautioning him against trusting such a perjurious neighbor. Angered by the ignoble behavior of the Hungarian ruler, Henry, together with his *protégée* Peter, once again gathered his forces against Aba. The decisive battle of Ménfő was won by the Germans and the supporters of the exiled King Peter, because some of the fighters of Aba “in their abiding friendship towards King Peter, cast their banners to the ground and fled.” Even though the chronicler notes also that the German tradition cited divine intervention as the source of victory, which could have contributed to the Papal anathema cast on the Hungarians for dishonouring King Peter, it seems rather fitting for a ruler who held oaths in disregard to be betrayed by his own troops. The fate of the defeated King Aba, who after fleeing the field of defeat was “cruelly killed by some Hungarians to whom during his reign he had done some evil,”<sup>54</sup> definitely reads as a cautionary tale for future rulers on the consequences of not being faithful toward one’s own subjects.

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50 72 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 135–36.

51 72 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 135–36.

52 75 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 140–41.

53 75 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 140–41.

54 76 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 142–47.

That said, the *Illuminated Chronicle* does seem to contain remnants of the differing traditions about the rise and fall of King Aba, whose portrayal as a tyrant was not shared by all works of Hungarian historiography. As credibly argued by József Gerics, it is possible that this narrative contains the elements of an alternative take on the egalitarian (or anti-magnate) positions of Aba, which would align attempts at curtailing the nobles power with 'the ideology promoted by the eleventh-century Hungarian church. This is because, contrary to what the *Illuminated Chronicle* seems to suggest, the church elite supported Aba well until his final battle.<sup>55</sup> Traces of Aba's alternative depiction, that of a supporter of the church and the common folk worthy of veneration, can be thus found in the short description of his dead body, which as the author of this part of the *Illuminated Chronicle* acknowledges, did not decay and had its wounds healed.<sup>56</sup> Taking this into account the ease with which the author of the surviving edition of the royal Hungarian historiographic tradition was able to construct the narrative of Aba as a perjurious king who meets his deserved end is quite telling. It speaks of the strength of the idea of loyalty between ruler and his subjects as a reciprocal bond that can be easily broken if one of the sides does not fulfill their mutual obligations.

### (Un)faithful subjects

The role of close advisors and important officials played in shaping the politics of the ruling dynasties indicates the importance of the highest-ranking subjects in the internal politics of Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary. One of the features shared by the earliest Central European chronicles was the close direct link drawn between the fate of the ruling family and the polity they ruled. Thus, conflicts within the dynasties were seen as strongly detrimental to the state. With complicated family dynamics, the depictions of the dynastic adversaries of the patrons of Gallus and the writers at Coloman's court, as well as the quarreling sons of Duke Břetislav II, were often nuanced by the figures of bad advisors. The members of the ruling elite were often seen as people who sow the seeds of dynastic discord, thus taking some of the responsibility for internecine strife away from the members of the ruling family. Nevertheless, few of those malicious advisors were accused of questioning the sacralized relationship between them and the anointed sovereigns from the Přemyslid, Piast, and Árpád dynasties, and even then such accusations were brought up indirectly.

This is for example the case with palatine Sieciech from the *Gesta principum Polonorum*. Although he is from the onset described as overambitious and power-hungry, the serious accusations against Sieciech are formulated only after Duke Władysław

55 Gerics, "Zu den Quellen der gesellschaftlichen Ideologie," 443 ff.

56 76 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 144–45.

decided to share his power with his sons, Zbigniew and Bolesław III. When the young Piast princes are joining their forces against Sieciech and their father, Bolesław's men tell him that Sieciech wants to eliminate the Piast family and seize the whole of Poland for himself. Although this accusation is further expanded upon in Zbigniew's speech, in which he describes the palatine's actions as "plots that are directed against our lives by persons whose aim it is utterly to abolish the succession of our kindred and by turning order upside down to distort the inheritance of natural lords", Gallus never fully embraces this claim.<sup>57</sup> Similarly indirect is the accusation leveled against *ispán* Vid in the *Illuminated Chronicle*. While Solomon's close advisor frequently incites the king against Géza and Ladislav, it is only after his death in the battle of Mogyoród that we learn from the comment of the holy prince that Vid might have had ambitions that would put him directly at odds with the junior branch of the Árpád dynasty.<sup>58</sup>

The earliest Central European chronicles also contained narratives that more clearly describe members of the Central European elite turning against their masters. The most notable example of such antagonists of ruling families were the Vršovici—stylized by Cosmas as the *inimici familiares* of the Přemyslids.<sup>59</sup> Chronicler recalls that their leader Kohan was at the hunting palace of adolescent prince Jaromír, when he learned of Jaromír's father having been defeated in Poland. This led Kohan to ponder: "Who is he [Jaromír], a little man worth less than seaweed, who ought to be greater than us and called lord? Is not a better man to be found among us, who might be more worthy to rule?" Thus, they decide to abuse Jaromír, who is forced to undergo humiliation until his servant Dovora manages to gather forces to rescue the Přemyslid.<sup>60</sup> For this act Kohan's people did not suffer immediate repercussions, but in a multigenerational perspective they can be said to have paid for their disloyalty—with the massacre of their kindred by Duke Svatopluk.<sup>61</sup>

Another example can be found in an even earlier part of the *Chronica Boemorum*. Shortly after the establishment of Přemyslid rule Cosmas describes the legendary war of the Bohemians, led by Přemysl's progeny Neklan against the neighboring

57 2.16 in *GpP*, 141–44.

58 122 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 228–29.

59 The prominent part that the Vršovici play in the *Chronica Boemorum* was noted by medievalists analyzing this source, who came up with different explanations of the role they play in Cosmas's wider story. In Peter Kopal's opinion the Vršovici, the *inimici familiares*, were supposed to serve as the foil to the Přemyslid dynasty, whose sacralization in the first book of the chronicle is contrasted with the demonization of the Vršovici, allowing the internal conflict to be presented in eschatological terms. For Lisa Wolverton the Vršovici are chosen by Cosmas as representatives of a wider social group of Bohemian elites, whose cruel behavior threatened the stability of the realm. See: Kopal, "Kosmovi dáblové," 7–40; Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 182–96.

60 1.34 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 89.

61 3.24 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 211–13.

Lučané. In an episode echoing the Trojan war, the Bohemians win the decisive battle thanks in large part to the heroic sacrifice of a brave warrior, Tiro, who leads them into battle pretending to be Duke Neklan.<sup>62</sup> After the Lučans are massacred, the son the duke of the Lučané Vlastislav, is spared by the victorious Přemyslid, who despite being a pagan behaves compassionately like a good Catholic. He places the young boy under the tutelage of a Sorabian man named DURING, old Neklan's tutor, who is described as the worst and most wicked of men, crueler than a beast.<sup>63</sup> This choice was advised by the *comites*, who argued that it would be best to control young Vlastislav's son, so that "the scattered people will not fly to the master's son", and that the subjugated Lučané will not conspire with the foreigner. They do predict, however, that DURING, "the second Judas", will plan the deceitful murder of his young *protegee*. Cosmas describes this treacherous act with gruesome detail, highlighting the prince's innocence and the heartlessness of his Sorabian tutor.<sup>64</sup> After cutting off the boy's head DURING takes it to Duke Neklan and his *comites*, where he explains that it was necessary to kill young prince before he could avenge Vlastislav's death. However, Duke Neklan is far from sharing this point of view, calling DURING's crimes beyond measure, a sin "greater than can even be called a sin."<sup>65</sup>

This episode in the chronicle, together with the whole war with Lučané, probably has its roots in an older oral tradition.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, Cosmas certainly made it his own, framing it as a cautionary tale with a straightforward moral—it is never permissible for a subject to raise his hand against his master.<sup>67</sup> Doing so was not simply against earthly laws, but also a sin (*peccatum*).<sup>68</sup> It is worth pointing out that in this example the sacralization of the relationship between DURING and the young prince of Lučané has nothing to do with any kind of divine mandate akin to one given to Přemysl. The story told by Cosmas to the Přemyslid subjects does seem to posit that bonds of lordship are protected by this sacred sanction, giving the condemnation of killing one's lord—even one from the rival dynasty—a universal meaning. There is also one other aspect of the characterization of DURING that seems to be especially important to the chronicler—his motivation. The wicked Sorabian clearly commits

62 1.12 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 47–49.

63 1.13 in *Chronica Boemorum*, 29.

64 1.13 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 61.

65 1.13 in *The Chronicle of the Czechs*, 62.

66 Třeštík, *Mýty kmene Čechů*, 172; Thus, Edward Skibinski points out the important royal-doppelgänger function that both warrior Tyro and DURING perform in relation to Duke Neklan, typical of oral traditions. See: Skibiński, "Średniowieczny kronikarz wobec tradycji oralnej."

67 An in-depth analysis of how Cosmas uses the references to Bible and Lucan's *Pharsalia* here can be found in: Wolverton, *Cosmas of Prague*, 62–68.

68 These conclusions in: Graus, "Über die sogenannte germanische Treue," 152; Repeated in: Razim, "Věrnost v Kosmově kronice," 33–34.



his heinous crime in the hope of being rewarded by Duke Neklan. Thus, the story of “second Judas” who killed an innocent boy counting on pieces of silver of his own can be seen as Cosmas’s critique of the relationship between rulers and their subjects based solely on remuneration rather than deeper Christian morals.

A brief example of “second Judases” being punished for their deeds can also be found in the royal Hungarian historiographical tradition. From the description of the conflict between King Solomon and Duke Géza in the *Illuminated Chronicle* we learn that when in 1074 the two Árpádians gathered their forces preparing to resolve a dynastic dispute on the battlefield near Kemej:

“The duke’s retainers or rather betrayers secretly sent messengers to the king to say that if the king would confirm them in their dignities and received them in his grace, they would desert the duke in battle and come over to the king. The king gave them upon oath the desired assurance, and then, feeling himself secure, crossed over the frozen Tisza to attack the duke.”<sup>69</sup>

Just as they promised, lords Petrud and Bikás with their followers abandoned Géza during the battle, switching sides to join King Solomon. Even though this meant that the valiantly fighting Duke was forced by the overwhelming enemy forces to withdraw from the field of battle, the traitors did not escape divine judgment:

“As the traitor Judas gave a sign, so the fleeing traitors, as they had arranged with the king, raised their shields as a sign that the king’s soldiers should not attack them. But the king’s men did not know about this sign of betrayal, and seeing the duke’s detachments in flight, they pursued them to their destruction, so that very few of those traitors escaped death; and would that not one of those had escaped who foully betrayed their lord and benefactor.”<sup>70</sup>

The comparison with Judas further strengthens the moral judgement expressed by the chroniclers. While due to the complicated nature of the Hungarian historiographical tradition there is no guarantee that both narratives were written by the same author, this story can be contrasted with the earlier episode found in the *Illuminated Chronicle*, the desertion of part of King Aba’s army during the battle of Ménfő. Since Aba’s faithless rule dissolved the bonds of loyalty between him

69 “Principes autem ducis ymo traditores, miserunt clamculo nuncios ad regem dicentes, quod si rex eos in dignitatibus suis teneret et in gratiam susciperet, ipsi in bello relicto duce ad regem confluerent. Rex autem certificavit eos super hoc prestito iuramento et securus tunc transivit Tysciam glaciata super ducem”, 117 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 214–16.

70 “Traditores autem fugientes levabant clipeos suos in signum, quod regi dederant, quemadmodum Iudas traditor, qui dederat signum ne milites regis eos persequerentur. Exercitus autem regis ignarus proditiōis signi et videntes agmina ducis fugere”, 117 in *Illuminated Chronicle*, 214–16.

and his followers, betrayal on battlefield is not treated by the author as something surprising—in stark contrast to the condemned battlefield betrayal of Duke Géza, good lord and benefactor of his followers.

The narrative about the restoration of Piast rule by Casimir the Restorer presented in the pages of *Gesta principum Polonorum* features a person named Mieclaw who shares certain similarities with DURING, but his story is certainly more convoluted than the examples above. After the death of Mieszko II, who was no longer characterized by the same extraordinary virtues as his father Bolesław I the Brave, the bond of fidelity between the Piasts and their subjects became fragile. Thus, Queen Mother Richeza, who ruled in the name of her adolescent son Casimir, was driven out of the country by “traitors (*traditores*) who bore her ill will.” The same traitors rose up against Casimir when he grew up, fearing that he would seek revenge for what they had done to his mother.<sup>71</sup> Gallus does not speak in more detail about the motivations of the traitors, but he makes it clear to his readers that the members of the ruling family are not to blame for their exile—the young age of Casimir seems to absolve him for any responsibility for his fate, while Richeza’s regency is characterized positively despite her gender.<sup>72</sup> The historically tumultuous reign of Mieszko II is hardly mentioned by the chronicler; the only possible reminder of the crisis of the Piast state that begun in the 1030s is the reluctantly recalled information about the possible castration of the Polish ruler.<sup>73</sup>

The events that followed the exile of the young prince—foreign invasions, slaves’ revolt, and general destruction—are presented as the clear consequence of the absence of the Piast dynasty, so closely related to the prosperity of Poland.<sup>74</sup> Gallus ends his vivid depiction of the ruined country with a cautionary moral: “But let this suffice on the subject of Poland’s ruin, and may it serve in correction of those who failed to keep faith with their natural masters (*domini naturales*).”<sup>75</sup> The chronicler emphasizes that it was the lack of loyalty that led to the desolation of the country at that time, warning his audience about the terrible consequences of unfaithfulness toward the dynasty.<sup>76</sup> This is further indicated by the words of the young prince’s mother, who tries to dissuade her son from returning to his homeland, for its people “are not

71 1.18 in *GpP*, 75.

72 Gallus writes that Richeza “pro modo femineo regnum honorifice gubernaret”, 1.18 in *GpP*, 75.

73 1.17 in *GpP*, 74; Edward Skibiński sees the tradition about Mieszko’s castration as a trace of the old explanation for the dynasty’s inability to continue to exercise power, and thus to maintain the ties of fidelity linking it to its subjects, see: Skibiński, *Przemiany władzy*, 83.

74 Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai*, 220.

75 “Haec autem dixisse de Poloniae destructione sufficiat, et eis qui dominis naturalibus fidem non servaverunt ad correctionem proficiat”, 1.19 in *GpP*, 80.

76 Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai*, 219–21.

yet fully Christian and not to be trusted.”<sup>77</sup> The suggestive description of all the dramatic events that took place in Poland during the absence of *domini naturales*—the Piast rulers—serves both as a warning to the contemporary readers and a follow-up on the fate of the *traditores* responsible for the collapse of Bolesław’s state. Some of those who exiled Rycheza and Casimir, as the members of ruling elites, found death at the hands of the rebellious slaves, while others may have found themselves in the lucky group of those Poles who “fled over the river Vistula into Mazovia.”<sup>78</sup>

It is unclear, though rather doubtful, whether Miećław was among these *traditores*. He played an important function as cupbearer in Mieszko’s court, but it seems that if he had played a role in the expulsion of the ruling dynasty Gallus would have mentioned him by name earlier.<sup>79</sup> It is only after the depiction of the initial successes of the returning Casimir, who fended off the foreign invaders, that we are introduced to Miećław, who after the death of Mieszko “had the presumption to become the leader and standard-bearer of the Mazovian people.” As the leader of the Mazovians, he not only refused to submit to Casimir, but even began to resist him militarily. The Piast prince, who did not consider the rogue cupbearer as anything more than a rebellious servant, attacked Miećław’s forces and despite his numerical disadvantage defeated the rebels who were fighting for an unjust cause.<sup>80</sup>

Thus Miećław’s main crime does not lie in his participation in the expulsion of the Piast prince. Janusz Bieniak’s suggestion that it was Miećław’s ambition to press his own claim to the former domain of Piasts also seems too far-fetched.<sup>81</sup> The words *quod sibi non cedebat per ius aliquod vel naturam* seem to refer to the title of *princeps* of Mazovians, rather than to any further ambitions.<sup>82</sup> It seems therefore that the most important thing in the story of Miećław is his refusal to submit to his returning *dominus naturalis*.<sup>83</sup> It was the servant’s reluctance to recognize Casimir as his overlord that prompted the young prince to action. The way in which the leader of the Mazovians resisted his natural lord was probably also important—by military and insidious means, guided by disastrous pride and ambition. The negative picture of Miećław is complemented by the fact that it was the pagan Pomeranians that hurried to aid him in the battle.<sup>84</sup>

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77 1.19 in *GpP*, 80.

78 1.19 in *GpP*, 80.

79 Bieniak, *Państwo Miećława*, 74.

80 1.20 in *GpP*, 82.

81 Bieniak, *Państwo Miećława*, 82–86.

82 Similarly Dziewulski, “Sprawa Miećława (Masława),” 470.

83 Skibiński, *Przemiany władzy*, 94.

84 1.21 in *GpP*, 84–86.

But why should the trusted man Mieszko II, faced with the death of the old monarch and the collapse of his state, consider the prince returning from exile as his ruler? According to Gallus the answer is simple: because the Piasts are the “natural masters” of Poland. The Polish common folk seem to recognize him as such immediately, since immediately after the young prince crosses the border, the citizens of an unnamed castle open the gates for him.<sup>85</sup> The devotion of the common-folk is further highlighted by the heroism of “a soldier from the rank and file” (*de gregariis militibus*) who saves Casimir’s life during the battle with Miecław.<sup>86</sup> With the expulsion of the foreign invaders, Casimir gained the right to recognize all Poles as his subjects, from whom he had the right to expect loyalty.<sup>87</sup> Even if he had not dealt with the Piasts before, Miecław should have recognized the divine claim of the dynasty. Thus, both the description of the fall of Poland and the clash between Casimir and Miecław serve mainly to emphasize the need to remain faithful to the natural lords—the Piast dynasty. The first describes the consequences of not remaining faithful, the second emphasizes the unbreakable nature of the bonds of loyalty between the Poles and the dynasty.

## Conclusions

Thus, the overview of the role of loyalty between rulers and their subjects in the earliest Central European chronicles shows that the dominant vision shared to some degree by the authors of all three works was that of mutual commitments based on the *do ut des* rule. The content of the bond of loyalty was defined by both positive and negative obligations. To the first set belonged the expectation of reliable counsel and assistance on the part of the ruler, whereas his subjects could count on participation in the sovereign authority of the ruler and on material rewards. The extent to which positive obligations are to be fulfilled was not defined in absolute terms, thus remaining open for interpretation by both the ruler and his subjects.

On the other hand, the negative obligations were clearly set out. Both the ruler and his subjects were forbidden to harm each other in any way. Infidelity toward the lord was universally recognized in all three of the chronicles as a grave moral failing, with those who committed it likened by Cosmas and the *Illuminated Chronicle* to Judas. Stories of unfaithful subjects from the Hungarian historiographic tradition and the *Gesta principum Polonorum* end with those who betrayed their lords meeting divine justice, brought down by their own schemes. Such an interpretation can

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85 1.19 in *GpP*, 80.

86 1.20 in *GpP*, 83–84.

87 Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai*, 222.

also be offered for the ultimate fate of the Vršovici family. In turn, those rulers who crossed the limits of “negative loyalty” by perjury or by injuring their subjects were seen as tyrannous. The stories of King Vratislav II depicted by Cosmas, and of Kings Peter and Aba in the *Illuminated Chronicle*, illustrate how such behavior can lead to the dissolution of the bonds of loyalty. In the case of the Hungarian monarchs it even leads to their deposition, which is portrayed by the chronicler with silent approval.

It is safe to state that the concept of loyalty depicted in the earliest Central European narrative sources and the norms of social behavior they were creating do not differ significantly from those existing in other parts of Latin Europe. The shared Christian religion and involvement of the Central European rulers in the politics of their Western neighbors resulted in the importation of the common set of values shaping reciprocal social relationships. The authors of the first Central European chronicles, members of the intellectual elite of Latin *Christianitas*, did more than merely depict this process of integration: by facilitating internal communication through history writing, they actively participated in its development.

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